Leadership in Graduate Medical Education? Stephanie Call, Internal Medicine Program Director, defines it.

“Through her extraordinary creative efforts, willpower and dedication, Stephanie Call has produced one of the top, most sought after Internal Medicine training programs in the US today,” praised Chairman, Division of Pulmonary Disease and Critical Care Medicine, Alpha A. (Berry) Fowler, III, M.D. “As long-heralded programs such as Harvard, Johns Hopkins and Yale frequently fail to fill their Internal Medicine intern matches, the VCU School of Medicine Internal Medicine program consistently fills all positions with top flight graduates from medical schools across the US.”

“Stephanie is truly passionate about what she does,” wrote Lisa K. Brath, Program Director, Pulmonary-Critical Care Fellowship. “Her work ethic is beyond compare. I’ve lost count of the number of emails that she sends out at 2 am and thus the number of times we’ve all asked, ‘When does the woman sleep?’”

“Stephanie has demonstrated her commitment to the program, designing and implementing multiple education innovations and enhancements,” added Dr. Brath. “She’s also engaged the housestaff in the process of change, involving them directly in seeking programmatic improvements in clinic structure, call schedules and didactic conferences.”

“She has introduced behavioral interviewing, evidence-based practice methods, one-minute precepting, illness scripts and numerous other techniques to improve the program,” stated Peter Boling, Interim Chair, Division of General Internal Medicine. “A further testament to Stephanie’s leadership is the near perfect performance of VCU Internal Medicine graduates on the ABIM certifying exam since she took over directorship of the program,” added Dr. Fowler.

Her inclusive leadership approach has led to a sea change in the relationship between Internal Medicine and the subspecialty programs, “fostering an academic atmosphere and unparalleled cooperation between programs.” As evidence, program directors of all ten subspecialty programs: Nephrology, Pulmonary, Geriatrics, Hematology-Oncology, Hospice and Palliative Medicine, Cardiology, Rheumatology, Gastroenterology, Endocrinology and Infectious Disease, joined as one to second her Leadership award nomination: “Through her hard work and support, she has made the fellowships a vital part of the department rather than the poor cousins that we were before.”

Praise for Stephanie Call is not limited to the confines of the VCU Medical Center. “Her national leadership in the Association of Program Directors for Internal Medicine, her expertise in team-based learning, and her sustained recognition as a national expert on faculty development training have led to multiple invitations to speak and lead conferences all over the globe,” added John D. Buckley, M.D., M.P.H., President, Association of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine Program Directors. “However, her most important attribute is what she views as her primary career responsibility, and that is as her residents’ advocate, coach, role model and mentor. She does this with passion and exquisite effectiveness.”

“It seems that good educators and directors are eternally busy, and their reward for this is to actually become busier,” added Dr. Brath, “but whether it means meeting the resident at the hospital at 6 am or having them come to her house for dinner, Stephanie always finds the time. She constantly reminds us that ‘we work for the residents’ and that the residents are our highest priority.”

This is not the first award Stephanie Call has received. Among others, she is a past recipient of the Irby-James Award for Excellence in Clinical Teaching. It also assuredly will not be the last. As the Chair of the Department of Internal Medicine, Richard P. Wenzel, M.D., says, “She is one in a million, a superstar in our midst.”